

Volunteer Tennessee 2013-15 State Plan

Background:

Federal law provides that State Commissions, such as Volunteer Tennessee, must prepare a national service plan for the State that: is developed, through an open and public process; covers a 3-year period; includes measurable goals and outcomes for the State national service programs in the State; ensures outreach to diverse community-based agencies that serve underrepresented populations; provides for effective coordination of funding applications submitted by the State and other organizations within the State under the national service laws; is updated annually; ensures outreach to, and coordination with, municipalities (including large cities) and county governments regarding the national service laws; and contains such information as the State Commission considers to be appropriate or as the Corporation may require. In addition, federal law provides that the State shall work with appropriate State agencies and private entities to develop a comprehensive State service plan for service by adults age 55 or older.

Based on board strategic planning and input gathered from stakeholders, Volunteer Tennessee developed the following Tennessee State Plan.

I. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Improved outreach and name recognition.

Focus area: 1.2 Established high-visibility awareness campaign.

Target: 1.2.1 Intern dedicated to outreach/communication/development/marketing by 2015. (CC)

Target: 1.2.3 Celebrity champion: Expand partnership with Miss Tennessee organization to communicate volunteerism by 2015. (CC)

Target: 1.2.5 Increase volunteerism ranking to top 10 by 2015. (CC)

Goal 2: Programs that effect change.

Focus Area: 2.1 Statewide programming infrastructure.

Target: 2.1.1 Ensure funding is appropriated for value/quality programs. (GC)

Focus Area: 2.2 Institutionalized service-learning.

Target: 2.2.1 Build a relationship with the DOE to further advance service-learning. (FS)

Target: 2.2.2 Service-learning credit for high school project-based pathway to utilize meaningful service-learning by 2015. (FS)

Target: 2.2.3 Create a culture of best practices in service-learning by 2015. (FS)

Target: 2.2.4 Increase staff development and support by 2015. (FS)

Focus area: 2.3 Governor's signature event.

Target: 2.3.1 Increase county involvement in GVSA:

A. 50% of counties by 2013; 70% by 2014; 85% by 2015. (CC)

B. Increase number of youth recognized by 2015. (FS)

Target: 2.3.2 Governor attends GVSA by 2014. (SP)

Goal 2: Programs that effect change. (Cont.)

Focus Area: 2.4 Quality premier conference.

Target: 2.4.2 Increase visibility and participation in quality state conference: Partner with youth to develop/implement youth track at TCVSL by 2015. (FS)

Goal 3: Volunteer leadership through relationships.

Focus area: 3.1 Influential and acknowledged authority within government.

Target: 3.1.1 Governor is champion for volunteering and supports VT by 2015. (SP)

Target: 3.1.2 Policy makers know/support what we do:

A. Increase interaction opportunities with legislators by 2015. (CC)

B. Policy makers know/support what we do by 2015. (SP)

Focus Area: 3.2 Established and recognized leadership role.

Target: 3.2.1 Create "Champion of Service" certificate program for board members to recognize local individuals and organizations. (CC)

Target: 3.2.2 VT is the state leader of service and service-learning:

A. Increase board participation. (BD)

B. Create more balanced and informed committees by 2014. (BD)

C. Recruit new board nominees from diverse backgrounds (BD)

D. Facilitate personal Board contact with programs. (GC)

E. VT is the state leaders of service and SL. (FS)

F. Use local benchmarks to measure rates of volunteerism (as reliability check on the Volunteering in America report published by CNCS). (CC)

G. In observance of the 20th anniversary of Volunteer Tennessee and AmeriCorps, recognize past board members for their service. (BD)

Focus area: 3.3 Effective companion non-profit.

Target: 3.3.1 Non-profit established by 2013. (SP)

Target: 3.3.2 Non-profit operational and effective by 2015. (SP)

Target: 3.3.4 Non-profit organizes conference and sustainably funds programs: Steadily hand over funding responsibility to Friends of Volunteer Tennessee by 2016. (SP)

Focus area: 3.4 Established business partnerships.

Target: 3.4.1 Create partnership with public and private entities:

A. Work with the Strategic Partnerships Committee to develop ways to promote the companion nonprofit. (CC)

B. Create partnership with public and private entities by 2015. (SP)

Target: 3.4.2 At least one corporate sponsorship at \$10,000 by 2013. (SP)

II. State Service Plan for Adults Age 55 or Older

The nation is experiencing an increase in the number of individuals eligible for the services of the various programs established under the Older Americans Act of 1965. The U.S. Census Bureau 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates show the population of adults age 55 and older in Tennessee at almost 25% of the total population. Tennessee's Boomer population aged 60 and up will peak in 2012, and with that peak will come greater challenges for all of the systems that work to support older persons. While government and informal systems that historically work together to address the needs of older persons are stressed by the sheer numbers of older persons in the United States, it is important to acknowledge the opportunities that the growing number of older adults seek to contribute to, or pay back, their communities.

Adults who are 55 years or older are part of the Baby Boomer generation. Healthier, more active and more assertive information seekers than generations of the past, young Boomers, if offered interesting and rewarding opportunities to help their communities, will help to shore up faltering government and community resources. From a labor perspective, this population may be divided into three basic groups: 1) those who will retire and stop working earlier than their full Social Security retirement income eligibility, 2) those who will

work to the age of full Social Security retirement income eligibility and then retire and, 3) those who will continue to work beyond their full Social Security retirement income eligibility age. In a strong economy, more people will be inclined to retire early, but in a weak economy, as is the case at present, more will decide to stay in the workforce longer just to make ends meet. An October 2008 Local Employment Dynamics report from the Census Bureau indicated that adults age 55 and older made up over 28% of the Tennessee workforce. This same report showed that these older workers were primarily concentrated in rural areas of the State; however, several metropolitan areas showed high rates of increase in the number of older workers.

The enormous increase in the number of older workers brought about by the “aging-in” of the Boomers is creating a glut of job-seekers for relatively few paying positions. According to information provided by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, older workers will make up a higher proportion of the 2016 workforce, and approximately 75% of State employees are within 5 years of retirement. Paying positions are available, but competition to get those is stiff. A September 2009 American Community Survey Report from the Census Bureau indicated that 38.6% of 65-and-older workers in Tennessee worked full-time, year-round in 2008. Boomers looking for jobs are likely to be open to a variety of non-traditional “employment” configurations, provided that each offers some type of useful compensation. An example would be the pairing of older, experienced workers with younger workers for mentoring – the mentoring could be reciprocal, with the older person sharing skills acquired over decades of work in the same or a similar field with the younger worker and the younger worker helping the older one understand and navigate newer technology and methods of communication. Older workers who become less able to do strenuous physical work could benefit from learning new skills by working with younger people. Acceptable forms of compensation might include money, the exchange of goods or services, or opportunities for networking, new experiences or new learning.

According to Dr. Jim Powers, Chief of Geriatrics at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Nashville, some of the benefits for older workers in the work force include income, community engagement, mentorship of younger workers, an active and healthier lifestyle, and increased longevity. Some of the pressures that keep them in the work force include Social Security income that is inadequate to retire, low savings rate of US workers, financial requirements of caregiving for children/grandchildren, need to retain health insurance that would otherwise be unaffordable, and previous loss of pension/other work place retirement benefits.

(A) Recommendations for policies to increase service for adults age 55 or older, including how to best use such adults as sources of social capital, and how to utilize their skills and experience to address community needs:

Volunteer Tennessee recommends investigating the following policies to increase service for adults age 55 or older:

- 1) Policies that will engage adults to serve more in the roles of health and hunger;
- 2) Policies encouraging senior technology programs that tap into the vast resources of wisdom, experience and knowledge present in our aging baby boomers. The benefits to society are enormous to have volunteer consultants, trainers and coaches available online in a variety of fields, and the engagement can only be good for the physical, emotional and social health of the older volunteers.
- 3) Policies that will assist older adults in finding volunteer opportunities that best fit their interests.

(B) Recommendations to the State agency on aging:

Rather than making recommendations to the Tennessee Commission on Aging on these issues, Volunteer Tennessee believed that a more appropriate approach was to seek recommendations from the Commission on

Aging on ways that Volunteer Tennessee can support the Commission on Aging's existing goals related to marketing and outreach. The Commission on Aging developed these recommendations:

(i) The Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD) will develop a marketing outreach plan for dissemination to businesses statewide for the dual purpose of raising awareness among the general population about 1) the programs and services offered by the State's Aging and Disability network and about 2) the ever-increasing population of older adults generated by the "aging-in" of the Baby Boomer generation and the need for volunteers to help that population remain independent for as long as possible. TCAD will partner with chambers of commerce, large corporations, locally owned businesses, civic and fraternal groups, corporate retirement organizations, and other types of businesses to assure a thorough saturation of the business sector with the message that both services and opportunities to help are available for older adults. TCAD will ask businesses to partner with the Aging and Disability network on an ongoing basis to collaboratively address solutions to the problems that the older adult population will encounter.

The current Aging and Disability network offers many services through programs that operate primarily through the generosity of volunteers. Volunteers who are committed to the work are, however, very difficult to find and/or nurture. TCAD and the Aging and Disability network would greatly benefit from education and ongoing support from Volunteer TN to learn how to retain good volunteers and not only recruit and train them. The programs that utilize the services of volunteers are: Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program – volunteers are trained to serve in long-term care residential settings to advocate on behalf of residents; Public Guardianship Program – volunteers are trained to work with court appointed public guardians to assist individuals who are physically and/or mentally incapacitated and who, because they have no one to help them, are provided guardians, or conservators, by the courts; the Nutrition for the Elderly Program – volunteers are trained to deliver meals to older adults or those with disabilities in their homes and/or to assist with meal preparation at congregate meal sites, and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) – volunteers are trained to provide counseling to consumers about Medicare and other related health insurances. Each type of volunteer utilized by the network is different and the responsibilities range from taking meals into consumers' homes to helping a public guardian manage the checking account of a consumer under conservatorship to helping a consumer access health insurance coverage for a needed medication. Volunteers from the business sector could share their various skills to enhance the capacity of many of the programs of the Aging and Disability network.

Senior Centers are, per the Older Americans Act of 1965, to serve as community focal points for services and programs for older adults. Baby Boomers prefer not to be referred to as "seniors," so the concept surrounding senior "centers" must be re-worked. Members of the business community age 55 and older will be recruited to share their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including working with center directors to help them with strategic planning and in developing their own marketing and business plans. Engaging those nearing retirement age in the planning of the future for older adults in Tennessee makes good sense and could help to assure ongoing support to that population.

By educating the business or corporate sector about the needs and concerns of older adults, it may be possible to engage that sector in providing monetary, in-kind and/or volunteer support for the older adult community. Through collaboration with businesses, TCAD could create a program similar to the "Adopt a School" or "Adopt a Highway" programs wherein businesses would sponsor activities or programs for older adults. The exchange would be company recognition and acknowledgement through whatever activities, items or programs the company helped support.

(ii) TCAD will establish a system of ongoing outreach to non-profit agencies/organizations, the State Department of Education, the network of public and private colleges and universities in Tennessee and other

State agencies for the purpose of disseminating information about the availability of services for older adults through the Aging and Disability network and for volunteer recruitment. Outreach could take the form of presentations to State agencies, newsletters highlighting program accomplishments, volunteers and the need for volunteers being distributed via e-mail and hard copy mailings to non-profit agencies, articles and advertisements placed in other networks' newsletters, and ads and articles in local community and college newspapers. TCAD could partner with the State Department of Education for distribution of information through the statewide public school system and could, also, create new and promote existing intergenerational programs to include students and older adults, such as the Foster Grandparent Program.

(C) Recommendations for civic engagement and multigenerational activities:

To encourage civic engagement and multigenerational activities, Volunteer Tennessee recommends:

- 1) Using adults 55 and older coupled with college students and high school students (e.g. Tennessee Scholars) to address community problems through service-learning projects. Such a combination could provide for outstanding civic engagement opportunities and pass on new and reflective responses on behalf of all parties as they work together to meet service project work. Mentoring would take place and allow for the exchange of experience and career/workforce dialogue from both parties.
- 2) Developing a wide range of volunteer opportunities for adults that are highly skilled in their fields and who want to create change and make an impact in their communities.

(D) Recommendations for encouraging the development of Encore service programs in the State.

To encourage development of Encore service programs in the State, Volunteer Tennessee recommends:

- 1) Further support and investigation of ongoing discussions with other State Commissions on the possibility of a National Direct AmeriCorps Encore program. Such a program would allow placement of Encore members in rural communities and meet the needs of those communities by conducting activities such as financial literacy, housing placement assistance, and volunteer recognition as a means of increasing volunteerism to meet community needs in general.
- 2) Support for potential senior technology programs (as mentioned in (A)2) above) that would combine volunteers 55 and older with school students (K-16) working in service-learning contexts to serve communities and underserved individuals in high need of digital training and access.